

VZCZCXRO1895
PP RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHKU #0360/01 0701407
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 111407Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8492
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000360

SIPDIS

NOFORN
SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KU](#) [ISLAMISTS](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: KUWAIT CONSIDERING ANTI-CORRUPTION
WATCHDOG AGENCY

REF: A. KUWAIT 258
[1](#)B. 06 KUWAIT 556

Classified By: Ambassdor Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary: Salah Ghazali, the head of the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS), reported on March 10 that the Amiri Diwan had prepared a decree establishing a government anti-corruption watchdog agency that would rank government institutions according to their corruption levels. According to Ghazali, the Government is having the decree reviewed by the World Bank to ensure its compliance with international standards before issuance. Ghazali is cautiously optimistic that the anti-corruption agency could be established by the end of 2007. Ghazali went into some detail about corruption in Kuwait, describing how it starts in the parliament and pervades the ministries, the judicial branch, and government contracts. Ghazali noted that real solutions would only come as a result of decisive action by the Amir.

GOK Anti-Corruption Watchdog Agency in the Works

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Salah Ghazali, head of the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS), told PolOff on March 10 that an Amiri Decree establishing a government institution to combat corruption was in the final stages of preparation. According to Ghazali, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ismail Al-Shatti told him the decree had been transferred to the World Bank for final review, to ensure the decree's provisions were consistent with international norms. Once this governmental watchdog is set up, it would monitor the institutions of the state to expose corruption. Ghazali said KTS proposed the establishment of the anti-corruption body to the Amir at its latest conference in January. He is optimistic that the decree will follow the KTS' recommendations, the most important of which is that the body publish a corruption report every three months. The report's main feature would be the Kuwait Anti-corruption Index for Public Institutions (KAIFI), which would rank Kuwaiti government institutions in terms of their corruptness. Ghazali said he hoped to hear further news about the anti-corruption institution shortly after the formation of the new cabinet and was cautiously optimistic that the institution might be established by the end of the year.

Corruption Starts in Parliament, Spreads through Ministries

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Ghazali talked at some length about the kinds of corruption found in Kuwait. He started by saying that the main source of corruption in Kuwait is the parliament. He noted that while election mechanics in Kuwait are free of corruption, there is a great deal of "vote buying." Traditionally, vote buying was straightforward and candidates

had ways of checking to make sure the voter voted as he promised. However, as verification became more difficult, other forms of vote buying appeared. For instance, a candidate offers to fix up a constituent's diwaniyya or facilitates the constituent's getting medical treatment abroad at government expense. Ghazali acknowledged that there is a gray line between which of these cases are truly vote buying and which are normal politics. The important point for him is that MPs use their positions of influence to dole out services in exchange for loyalty. Ghazali also pointed out that a number of MPs are backed by powerful business interests and successfully lobby to help them get government contracts.

¶4. (C/NF) Ghazali described corruption in government contracts as particularly pervasive. He believes that most if not all government contracts involve some level of corruption. Ghazali also cited corruption at ministries in the form of bribes for licenses and permits. He asserted that while judges in Kuwait were not corrupt, the bureaucracy of the judicial branch was a significant source of corruption as well.

Solution Must Come from Top

¶5. (C/NF) Ghazali said that he has had three private audiences with the Amir in the year since KTS' founding. Each time, the Amir encouraged him to expose corruption wherever he found it. The Amir even asked Ghazali to write the Amir's speech for the January KTS conference. While Ghazali said he believes the Amir sincerely wants to end corruption, he also criticized the Amir, noting that the Amir complained about corruption "like an average citizen" when he

KUWAIT 00000360 002 OF 002

in fact had the power to stop it. Ghazali dismissed concerns that the Sabah family would create an internal crisis by standing up to corruption. First, he argued, no one seriously challenges Sabah family rule. Second, average citizens are longing for non-corrupt, transparent government institutions and will support efforts to achieve this. Ghazali contrasted the Health Minister, whom Ghazali claimed had allowed runaway corruption, with the Minister of Public Works, who had made clear from the beginning that he would not tolerate corruption. Ghazali said the Minister of Public Works enjoys wide popularity whereas the Health Minister was the object of public outcry and parliamentary grilling. Despite his belief that standing up to corruption would be popular, Ghazali acknowledged that significant changes will be difficult without a major push from the Amir.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

LeBaron